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ferrari 348 buyers guide

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Ferrari 348 Buyers Guide: A Complete Roadmap to the Iconic Mid Engine Sports Car

When you think of a Ferrari that feels like a classic sports car with a modern twist, the **Ferrari 348** immediately comes to mind. Introduced in 1989 as the first Ferrari to feature a mid engine layout, the 348 combined striking design, powerful performance, and a level of practicality that set it apart from its contemporaries. Over the past decade, the 348 has become a coveted collector's item, and buying one now requires a clear understanding of its history, variants, and what to look for in a used vehicle.

This guide walks you through everything you need to know before you make a purchase— from the car's specifications and key models to maintenance tips and market trends. Whether you're a seasoned collector or a first time Ferrari buyer, this article will help you navigate the world of Ferrari 348 ownership with confidence.

1. The Ferrari 348 in Context

1.1 The Birth of a New Era

Ferrari's transition to a mid engine layout began in the late 1980s. The **Ferrari 348** was the company's first production model to house the engine behind the driver, a design that would become the foundation for future high performance models. The 348 was introduced at the 1989 Paris Motor Show and quickly garnered attention for its sleek lines, lightweight chassis, and the distinctive "saw tooth" front bumper that gave it an unmistakable presence.

1.2 Production Numbers and Legacy

Only 3,152 Ferraris were built between 1989 and 1995, making the 348 relatively rare compared to mass produced sports cars. Its limited production run, combined with its historical significance, has helped maintain strong demand among collectors. The 348 also played a pivotal role in Ferrari's development of the 360 and 458, sharing many engineering principles that continue to influence modern Ferrari models.

1.3 Why the 348 Still Matters

- Timeless Design – The 348's aerodynamic shape and low stance give it a timeless aesthetic that appeals to both classic car enthusiasts and modern sports car lovers.
- Performance – With a 3.5 liter V8 engine producing 280–310 horsepower, the 348 can sprint from 0 to 60 mph in under six seconds.
- Practicality – Unlike many exotic sports cars of its era, the 348 offers a usable trunk space and a comfortable cabin for two.
- Historical Significance – As the first mid engine Ferrari, the 348 represents a turning point in the brand's engineering philosophy.

2. The 348 Family: GT, GTO, and 348M

2.1 The 348 GT (1989–1995)

The base model, the **348 GT**, was available in both coupe and targa versions. It was powered by a 3.5 liter, 90° V8

that produced 280 horsepower in the early years, increasing to 310 horsepower by 1994. The GT's 5 speed manual transmission (later replaced by a 6 speed automatic in later years) made it a popular choice among enthusiasts who prized driving engagement.

2.2 The 348 GTO (1993–1995)

The **348 GTO** was the performance oriented variant, featuring a more aggressive aerodynamic package, a larger rear wing, and a revised suspension tuned for track use. It also boasted a more powerful engine output of 310 horsepower, and its 6 speed manual gearbox gave it a sharper feel. The GTO's limited production—only 1,000 units—has made it especially sought after.

2.3 The 348M (1996–1997)

Produced after the original 348's production ended, the **348M** was a lightweight, track focused version of the car. It featured a 3.5 liter V8 tuned to 335 horsepower and a revised gearbox that offered better acceleration. The 348M's chassis was lighter, and its suspension was tuned for high performance driving.

2.4 Choosing Between Models

- Performance vs Practicality – If you want the most spirited experience, the GTO or 348M may be preferable. For daily driving and a more relaxed feel, the GT is ideal.
- Price Point – The GT generally commands a lower price due to its broader production run, while the GTO and 348M often carry a premium.
- Availability – The GT is easier to find on the market, whereas the GTO and 348M are rarer and may require more patience to locate.

3. Performance and Technical Specifications

3.1 Engine and Powertrain

The 348's 3.5 liter V8 engine is a naturally aspirated, 90° layout with a 9.5:1 compression ratio. Depending on the model year, it produces between 280 and 335 horsepower and 280–320 lb ft of torque. The engine is mated to a 5 speed manual transmission (up to 1995) or a 6 speed manual/automatic (post 1995). The car's 6 speed manual gearbox offers a close gear ratio spread that enhances acceleration.

3.2 Performance Figures

- 0–60 mph – 5.5 to 6.2 seconds (GT), 5.2 to 5.6 seconds (GTO), 5.0 to 5.4 seconds (348M)
- Top Speed – 170–175 mph (GT), 175–180 mph (GTO), 180–185 mph (348M)
- Fuel Economy – Approximately 12–14 mpg city, 18–20 mpg highway

3.3 Handling and Dynamics

The mid engine placement gives the 348 a low polar moment of inertia, resulting in precise handling and balanced weight distribution. Its double suspension setup (MacPherson struts front, multi-link rear) provides a smooth ride while maintaining sharp cornering capabilities. The car's lightweight chassis and aerodynamic design also contribute to its overall performance.

4. What to Inspect When Buying a Ferrari 348

4.1 General Condition

1. Exterior – Check for rust, paint condition, and any body damage. The 348's aluminum body is prone to corrosion if not properly maintained.
2. Interior – Inspect upholstery, dashboard components, and electronics. Look for wear on the seats and any

signs of water damage.

3. Trunk – Verify that the trunk space is intact and that the hatch or targa top is operational.

4.2 Mechanical Health

1. Engine – Look for oil leaks, coolant leaks, and proper engine compression. A professional diagnostic test is recommended.
2. Transmission – Ensure smooth gear shifts and no unusual noises. Verify that the clutch (manual) or torque converter (automatic) is in good condition.
3. Suspension – Inspect shocks, struts, and bushings for wear or damage. Check alignment and tire wear patterns.
4. Brakes – Examine brake pads, rotors, and calipers. Ensure the ABS system functions correctly.

4.3 Service History

A comprehensive service record is the best indicator of a car's care. Look for regular oil changes, scheduled maintenance, and any documented repairs or restorations. A well maintained 348 will typically have a lower mileage and a cleaner history.

4.4 Documentation

- Title and Registration – Verify ownership and confirm no liens.
- VIN Verification – Cross check the VIN with Ferrari's records to ensure authenticity.
- Warranty or Service Contracts – Some owners may have extended warranties or service contracts that can be transferred.

5. Common Issues and Maintenance Tips

5.1 Electrical System

Older Ferraris sometimes suffer from faulty wiring or a failing alternator. Inspect all lights, gauges, and the battery for proper operation. Replace any corroded or frayed wiring promptly.

5.2 Cooling System

Leaks in the radiator, hoses, or water pump can lead to overheating. Inspect the cooling system for signs of leaks, and replace any worn components. A fresh coolant flush can prevent long term damage.

5.3 Brake Wear

Brake rotors on the 348 can develop warping if used aggressively. Inspect rotor thickness and look for uneven wear. Replace pads and rotors if necessary.

5.4 Suspension Components

The multi link rear suspension can suffer from worn bushings and ball joints. Regularly check for play or noise. Replacing bushings during a restoration can significantly improve ride quality.

5.5 Engine Oil and Filters

Use high quality synthetic oil recommended by Ferrari. Change the oil every 5,000–7,000 miles or as per the service manual. Replace the oil filter each time to ensure optimal engine performance.

5.6 Rust Prevention

Ferrari's aluminum body is susceptible to oxidation. Regularly inspect the chassis for rust, especially around the wheel arches and door sills. Apply a rust preventative coating if needed.

6. Restoration vs. Buying As Is

6.1 Restoration Pros and Cons

- Pros – A restored 348 can offer near new performance, updated safety features, and a fresh aesthetic.
- Cons – Restoration can be expensive, time consuming, and may involve sourcing rare parts.

6.2 Buying As Is

Purchasing a car in its current condition can be more affordable and less stressful. However, you should be prepared for potential repairs and maintenance. Conduct a thorough inspection and obtain a pre purchase inspection from a certified Ferrari mechanic.

7. Pricing and Market Trends

7.1 Current Market Value

As of 2026, the average price for a well maintained 348 GT ranges from $35,000 to $45,000, depending on mileage and condition. GTO models typically fetch between $

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